Evaluating the Living Rock Ministries TRI-Rock Program and Data Management System

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May 2004

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Living Rock Ministries is an interdenominational resource and outreach that provides support, safety, training, social-recreational programs and positive relationships, enabling street-involved youth to find direction and purpose. In January 2001 the Living Rock introduced the TRI-Rock Program, designed to provide street involved youth with life skills, paid work experience and support in securing and maintaining adequate and affordable housing.

This intensive thirty-week program is primarily supported through funding from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and the Provincial Homelessness Initiative Fund (PHIF). Additional funding was provided over the last three years through The Ontario Trillium Foundation, and start-up or seed funding was also provided through The Hamilton Community Foundation

The TRI-Rock program incorporates two distinct phases. Phase I involves ten weeks (35 hours per week) of education, group work, soft skills training, and counseling in such areas of job search and resume preparation, anger management, work etiquette, problem solving, health and nutrition. During Phase II of the program, TRI-Rock participants are provided with a twenty-week employment placement opportunity with a local business or organization.

Since the introduction of the TRI-Rock program, the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) has been working closely with the Living Rock. Funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation allowed for extensive consultation during year 1 of the program, with a gradual decrease in involvement through years 2 and 3. During this three-year partnership, the SPRC met the following two objectives:

1. To design and conduct an evaluation of the TRI-Rock Program, assessing the success of the program in achieving its goals.
2. To develop a sustainable system of data management, to enable ongoing evaluation of the TRI-Rock Program, and to provide up-to-date information on the Living Rock Ministries general client population.

The TRI-Rock evaluation plan was developed and implemented over a three-year period, and provides the Living Rock with the tools to generate reports on specific program outcomes. In addition, the Living Rock now has the capacity to generate reports on the characteristics of the general client population.

Section 2 of this report provides an overview of the data management system developed for the Living Rock. The system was designed to generate a series of

standard reports, providing insight into the needs and circumstances of their client population. A description of each of these reports is provided, as well as a snapshot of findings.

Section 3 of the report focuses on the TRI-Rock program evaluation, and provides a detailed overview of the program. The evaluation design includes both an assessment of program outcomes, as well as an examination of the program development process. Each of these components and findings are discussed in detail.

The final section of the report incorporates a discussion of findings and a set of conclusions related to the success of the TRI-Rock program, as well as the benefits and challenges of developing an information management system.

2.0 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

During the first year of this three-year initiative, the SPRC worked closely with the Living Rock to determine the data collection and management needs. In year two, the SPRC sub-contracted the Community Centre for Media Arts (CCMA) to build an Access database. From this point the three organizations worked together to develop and refine the processes of data collection, input and management.

Consistent with the objectives of this initiative, the Access database developed for the Living Rock maintains records of identified outcomes of the TRI-Rock program. These outcome measures will be discussed in detail in Section 3.0 of this report. The database also maintains information collected during general intake or admission to any Living Rock programs, as well as information specific to users of "The Cave" food bank, accessible through the Living Rock.

2.1 Benefits of an Information Management System

The information management system was developed to be fully sustainable. Key Living Rock staff have been trained in data collection and input, as well as in generating standard reports. New processes of data collection and management replace old processes, so there is a minimal increase in resources required. The capacity for reporting however, has increased exponentially.

There are three key benefits to the development of an effective information management system. First, the agency increases its capacity to assess the impact/outcomes of specific programs and services. This is a benefit to the agency in that it can more easily identify where a program has been successful or effective and, alternatively, where a program may need to be refined. By creating a "feedback loop" for program administrators, a program can be responsive to unmet needs.

The second benefit of an effective information management system is that it can help an agency to identify emerging trends among their client population. In the case of the Living Rock, the data management system allows for the analysis of issues and circumstances facing the general client population, as well as information related to specific programs. An awareness of shifts or trends within the broad client population allows an agency to be more responsive in its programming, and therefore more effective and efficient.

Finally, the creation of an information management system at the agency level benefits the community through an increased understanding of issues and

circumstances facing street involved youth. This information can be used as the foundation for effective community service planning for this growing population.

2.2 Challenges in Developing an Information Management System

There were two primary challenges in the development of the Living Rock Ministries information management system. The first challenge was in identifying the most relevant information to collect that is sensitive enough to show trends over time.

As mentioned above, the actual database development did not happen until year two of the three-year initiative. During this time the SPRC, the Living Rock and the CCMA worked closely to establish data collection tools and processes. Even today, based on an analysis of current reports, the database requires refinement. Intentionally, the database was designed to allow for modification, by adding or changing specific fields.

The second challenge of developing an effective data management system was the issue of self-reporting. The general intake form for the Living Rock Ministry programs collects information on several personal issues or aspects of the clients' life. Data is collected regarding specific issues such as substance use, health status, and housing status.

Considering findings from the standard reports, Living Rock staff have identified a number of areas where under-reporting is suspected. The information provided by clients is also voluntary, and a client can refuse to answer any of the questions included in the intake form. Areas where under-reporting is suspected are identified in the descriptions of specific standard reports. In many of these cases, ongoing monitoring and revision of specific questions included in the intake form will help to increase the validity and reliability of data.

2.3 Standard Reports

This section of the report presents a series of standard reports designed to identify issues and circumstances facing the Living Rock's general client population, street-involved youth aged 15 to 25 years. The following reports have been created, based on information collected from clients at intake. Living Rock staff can easily produce these reports by simply selecting from a prepared menu.

The capacity to produce these reports is not only of value to the agency, but also to the broader community for the purpose of service planning. By comparing these reports to existing community information on youth, we can begin to understand some of the issues and circumstances specific to street-involved youth. As a community we can then develop strategies, based on empirical evidence, to address

these issues and circumstances in a way that promotes stability and self-sufficiency.

It should also be noted that the database allows for reporting on information collected during intake, which does not appear in the standard reports. By conducting an analysis of gender, for example, Living Rock staff determined that male to female ratio of their clients is close to equal (55% males and 45% females). Historically, staff reported a significant male majority.

A detailed analysis of the Living Rock client population was beyond the scope of this initiative. We do however, make general observations of report findings. In some cases, data representing the total youth population in Hamilton is included for comparison, where data was readily available. Where Living Rock staff have identified areas where under-reporting is suspected, anecdotal evidence is provided to supplement findings from the specific report.

These reports should be viewed as a snapshot of issues facing street-involved youth, and indications of areas where programs or services may be required to effectively support this population.

2.3.1 Report on Housing Status

This report identifies the housing status or living situation of Living Rock clients at the time of intake. This information is valuable in terms of identifying immediate housing support needs of clients. It can also help to identify any emerging trends in housing among street involved youth in Hamilton.

Specifically, the report provides a breakdown of client housing status, based on seven predetermined options. Clients were also given an "Other" option, if their current housing status did not fall into any of the categories provided. As shown in TABLE 1, almost twenty percent (20%) or one-in-five Living Rock clients were living in shelters, hostels or drop-ins at the time of intake. Males were three times more likely to be living in these situations.

The majority of clients reported living with friends or family, and either paying rent (26%) or not paying rent (24%). While these would seem to be the most stable of the housing status options, Living Rock staff suggest that many of these clients are living in inadequate housing, facing overcrowding and often conflict with other residents. Based on anecdotal evidence reported during individual and group work, Living Rock staff suggest that many of those not paying rent are "couch surfing" or moving from residence to residence.

TABLE 1: Housing Status of Living Rock Clients at the Time of Intake

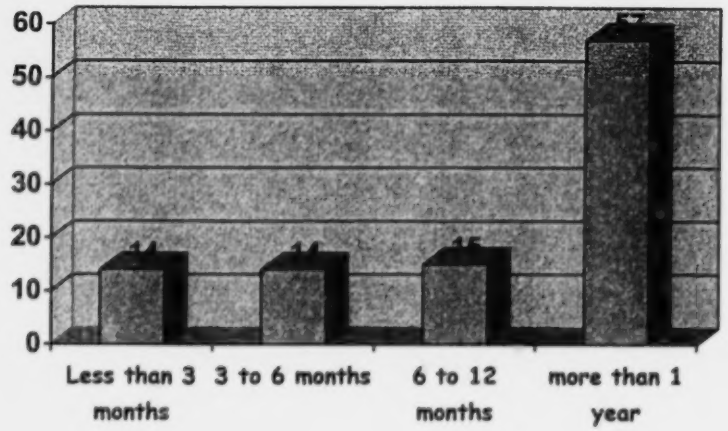
Status	Total	Females	Males
Paying rent for an apartment/home (alone)	191 (17%)	109	82
Paying rent for an apartment/home (friends or family)	284 (26%)	142	142
Paying rent for a room (rooming/boarding house)	22 (2%)	5	17
Living in a group home	21 (2%)	9	12
Living on the streets	15 (1.4%)	6	9
Living with family/friends but not paying rent	267 (24%)	119	148
Living in shelters/hostels/drop-ins	209 (19%)	54	155
Other	15 (1.4%)	7	8

To better understand some of these issues or variables, a tool was developed to assess the level of stability and adequacy of housing. The tool is a questionnaire that includes twelve indicators of housing stability and adequacy. Individual responses to these questions are scored, based on a multiple-choice response. The tool provides a single number or score reflecting housing adequacy and stability, which can be plotted on a continuum ranging from poor to adequate and stable. This housing assessment tool is currently being pilot tested with Living Rock clients, to assess their housing status at intake and over time. There were no findings available at the time of producing this report.

2.3.2 Report on Employment Status/History

This report identifies the number of clients who were employed at the time of intake, as well as a record of the longest period of employment. Of the 1098 clients on record, only 133 or 12% were employed at the time of intake. This is extremely low, given that the general population in Hamilton, aged 15 to 24, has an employment rate of 57%, almost five times higher.

CHART 1: The Longest Period of Employment Among Living Rock Clients



According to CHART 1, the majority of Living Rock clients did have some work history. However, forty-two percent (42%) reported working for less than one year consecutively. Living Rock staff report that much of the paid work that their clients have engaged in has been low-skilled temporary work, for low pay and no benefits.

2.3.3 Report on Education Level

This report identifies the highest level of education at the time of intake. Current research shows a strong correlation between education attainment and future success in the local labour market. When compared to the level of education for the general population in Hamilton, aged 15 to 24, a number of observations can be made.

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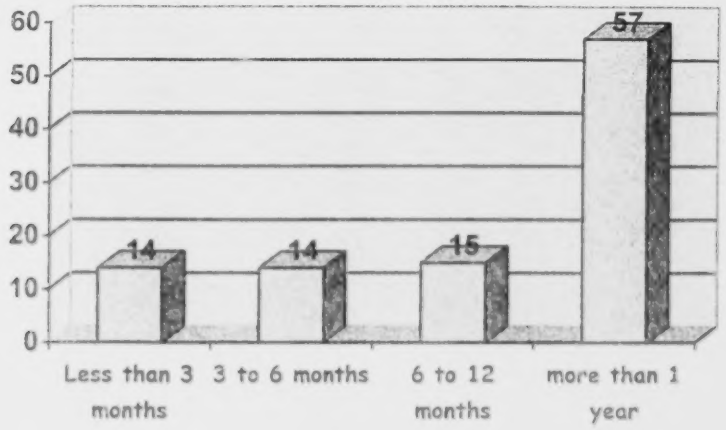

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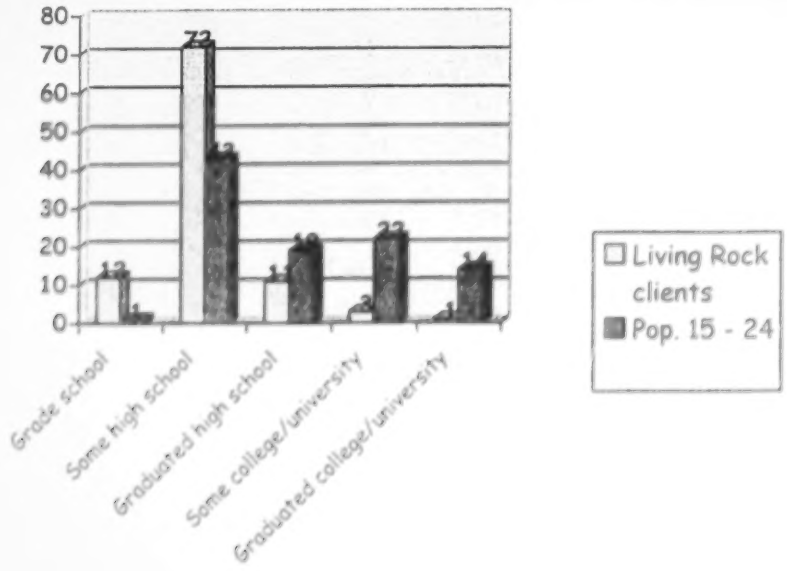
CHART 2: Highest Level of Education of Living Rock Clients, Compared to Hamilton's Population 15 to 24

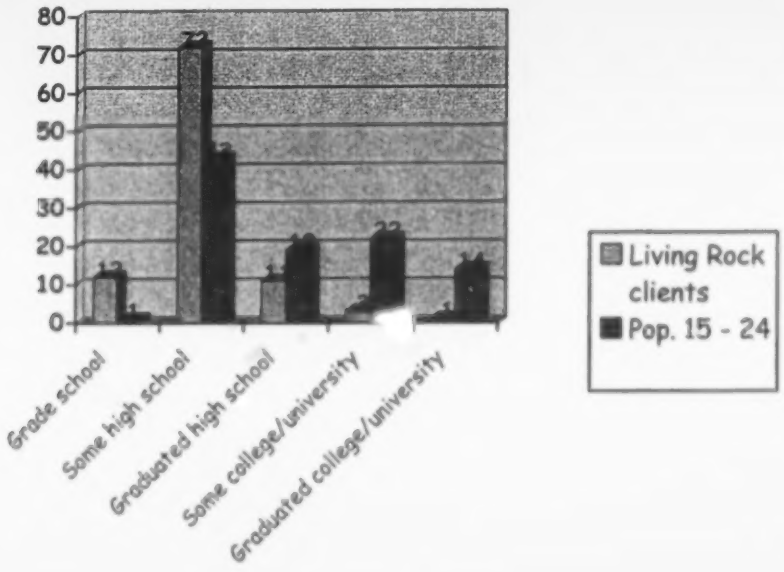


As shown in CHART 2, there are fewer street-involved youth aged 15 to 25 who have completed high school and engaged in post-secondary education (15%) than among the general youth population aged 15 to 24 (46%). Consequently, there are significantly more street-involved youth who have completed grade school or only "some high-school". According to Living Rock staff, very few of their clients are currently in school, indicating a high drop-out rate among this population.

2.3.4 Report on Ethnic Origin

This report provides an overview of the ethnic origin of Living Rock clients at the time of intake. This report is useful in identifying trends in service use/need among specific ethnic groups.

CHART 2: Highest Level of Education of Living Rock Clients, Compared to Hamilton's Population 15 to 24



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2.3.4 Report on Ethnic Origin

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TABLE 2: Ethnic Origin of Living Rock Clients at the Time of Intake

Ethnic Origin	Total Number	Percent
British	336	31%
French	156	14%
Western European	136	12%
Northern European	33	3%
Eastern European	74	7%
Southern European	76	7%
Western Asian	1	/
Arab	7	1%
African	42	4%
Southern Asian	8	1%
East/South Asian	11	1%
Latin, Central and South American	38	3%
Caribbean	3	3%
Aboriginal	159	14.5%

According to TABLE 2, almost fifteen percent (14.5%) of the Living Rock client population are of Aboriginal decent. This is a disproportionate representation, as Aboriginal youth account for less than 3% of the Hamilton youth population.

2.3.5 Report on Health Issues

This report provides an account of health issues at the time of intake, and whether or not clients have been prescribed medications. Health concerns are classified broadly as "physical problems" and "emotional problems".

TABLE 3: Health Issues Reported by Living Rock Clients at Intake

Health Concerns	Total	Females	Males
Physical problems	337 (28%)	167	170
Emotional problems	274 (24%)	140	134
Prescribed medications	210 (19%)	126	84

According to TABLE 3, approximately 1 in 4 Living Rock clients reported a physical or emotional problem (or both) at the time of intake (26%). Moreover, approximately 1 in 5 clients reported being prescribed medications (19%).

Health issues are one area where under-reporting is suspected by Living Rock staff. As clients become more comfortable at the Living Rock, they are more likely to disclose more personal issues such as mental health. It is also expected that many

mental health issues have gone undiagnosed among the street-involved youth population.

2.3.6 Report on Substance Use

This report identifies the level of substance use among Living Rock Clients at the time of intake. Specifically, the report considers tobacco, alcohol and marijuana use. TABLE 4 shows the prevalence of substance use among clients, with a breakdown by gender.

TABLE 4: Substance Use Reported at the Time of Intake

Substance	Total	Females	Males
Tobacco	59%	42%	52%
Alcohol	44%	36%	64%
Marijuana	28%	31%	69%

According to TABLE 3, the majority of Living Rock clients are smokers. While tobacco use is almost equal among males and females, both alcohol and marijuana use were reported more often among males.

Substance use is also an area suspected of under-reporting. Again, clients are more likely to disclose personal issues once a trust has been established with Living Rock staff. Based on the observations of staff during individual and group work, the level of marijuana use is thought to be much higher. In addition, there is thought to be a high level of "street drug" use such as ecstasy and met-amphetamines. While some information on the use of street drugs is collected during intake, the database needs to be refined to allow for accurate recording and reporting.

2.3.7 Report on Legal Involvement

This report identifies the number of clients reporting either pending or outstanding charges, or a probation order. TABLE 5 shows the level of legal involvement by gender.

TABLE 5: Legal Involvement Among Clients by Gender

Legal Involvement	Total	Males	Females
Pending/Outstanding Charges	10%	75%	25%
Probation Order	18%	81%	19%

According to TABLE 5, twenty-eight percent (28%) or more than one in four clients reported having either pending or outstanding charges or a probation order at the time of intake.

The report looks only at legal involvement at the time of intake, and does not consider a history of legal involvement. According to Living Rock staff, the proportion of clients with some history of legal involvement is likely more than half.

3.0 EVALUATING THE TRI-ROCK PROGRAM

The TRI-Rock Program is one of three work experience programs provided through Living Rock Ministries. Other work experience programs provided through the Living Rock include the Rock Experience Program (REP), and Rock Resources.

REP provides a supervised work environment where youth can volunteer and learn important work skills. Youth learn skills such as food preparation and general maintenance, and have opportunities to work in the community. REP is also used as a screening tool to assess youth for the TRI-Rock Program and Rock Resources.

The Rock Resources program focuses on high needs youth-at-risk, developing individualized programs. Components of Rock Resources include "work-to-earn" incentives for youth, who accomplish personal goals and meet needs of stable housing, life skills, education and an expanded sustainable support system.

In addition to work related programs, the Living Rock also provides breakfast and dinner programs, and operates a youth focused food bank. Clients have access to an on-site health clinic, as well as a youth shelter service. Staff visit and support youth at the Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre, and provide programming for specific populations such as young women through their "Just for Gurlz" program. Living Rock clients also enjoy a range of social and recreational activities offered on-site or in partnership with other local organizations such as the YMCA. These include a regular Chapel service and a youth gallery.

When evaluating the TRI-Rock program it was important to appreciate the full range of programs and services provided by the Living Rock. During the course of the program, TRI-Rock participants accessed multiple Living Rock programs and services. This suggests that the level of success of the program was enhanced by coordinated access to supports outside of the program itself.

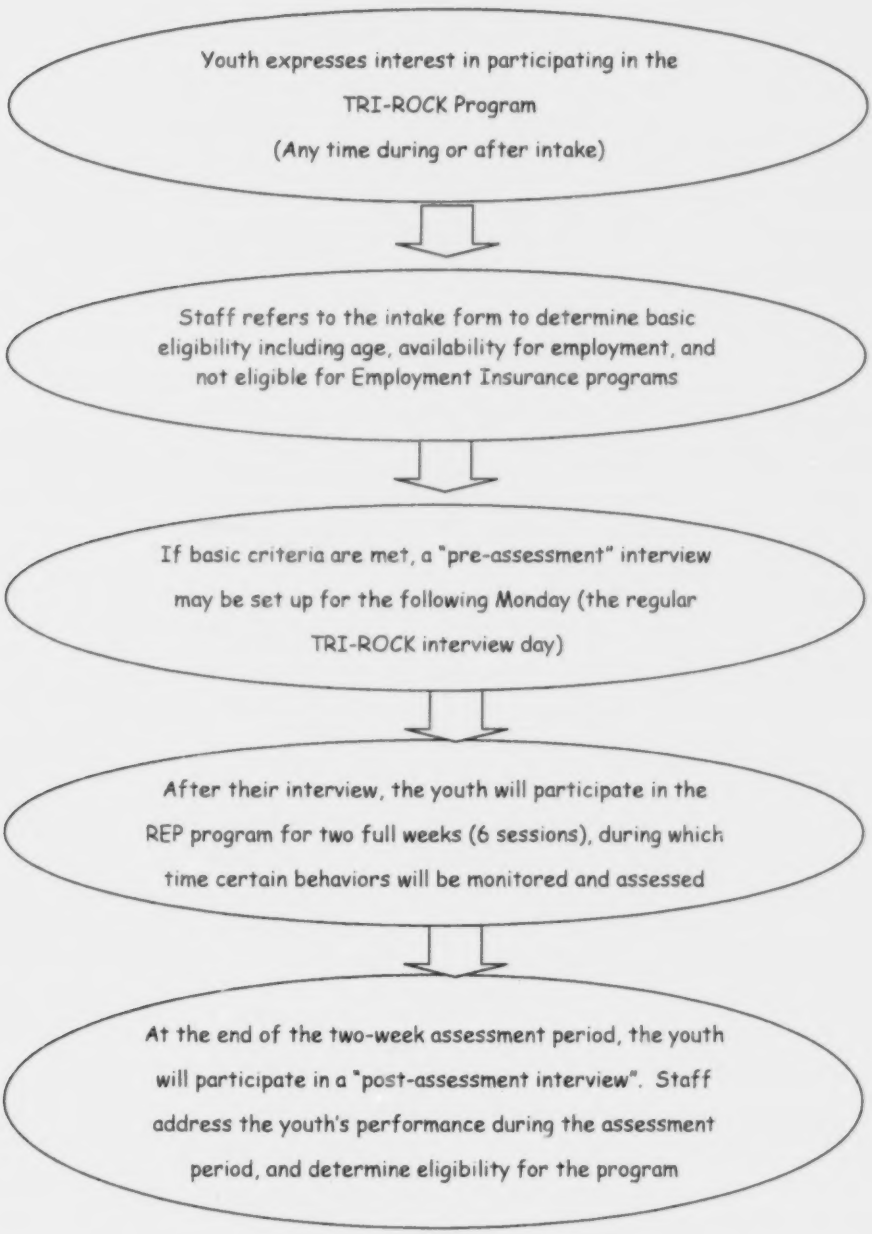
3.1 Program Overview

The target population for the TRI-Rock program is street involved youth, aged 16 to 25, who are unemployed and experiencing either absolute or relative homelessness. Assisting TRI-Rock participants in securing and maintaining adequate and affordable housing is a critical element of the program, acknowledging that an unstable living situation can constitute a substantial barrier to employment.

Youth enter the program in small groups at five-week intervals, so that groups are at different points in the program at any given time. Youth apply to the TRI-Rock program as existing or new Living Rock Clients. As shown in CHART 3, Living Rock

staff first determine the basic eligibility of clients. Basic eligibility criteria includes age (16 to 25) and availability to complete the entire thirty-week program (i.e. not a full-time student or employee, no outstanding criminal charges or pending court dates, and cannot be eligible for Employment Insurance programs).

CHART 3: TRI-Rock Program Application Process

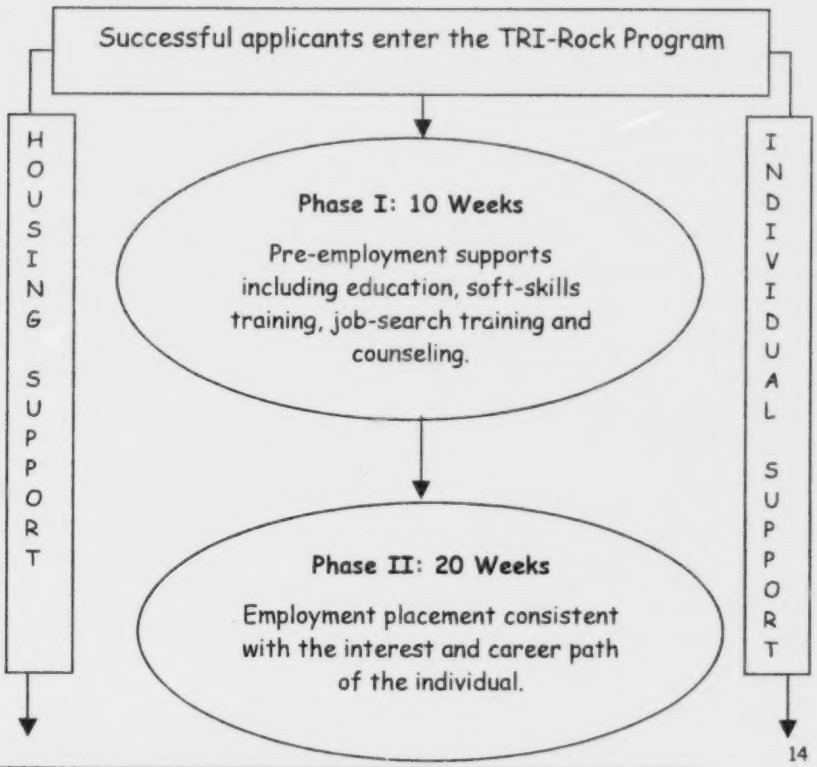

Youth expresses interest in participating in the TRI-ROCK Program (Any time during or after intake)
Staff refers to the intake form to determine basic eligibility including age, availability for employment, and not eligible for Employment Insurance programs
If basic criteria are met, a "pre-assessment" interview may be set up for the following Monday (the regular TRI-ROCK interview day)
After their interview, the youth will participate in the REP program for two full weeks (6 sessions), during which time certain behaviors will be monitored and assessed
At the end of the two-week assessment period, the youth will participate in a "post-assessment interview". Staff address the youth's performance during the assessment period, and determine eligibility for the program

If basic eligibility is met, a pre-assessment interview is scheduled with the applicant for the following Monday (Monday is the regular TRI-Rock interview day). Following a successful interview, applicants participate in the Rock Experience Program (REP) for two weeks (six 3 hour sessions), during which time the applicant can be assessed in terms of suitability for the program (eg. Punctuality, cooperation, work ethic, etc.).

At the end of the two-week assessment period, TRI-Rock applicants participate in a post-assessment interview. At this time staff address the applicant's performance during the assessment period, and either accept the applicant or recommend areas for improvement.

Once accepted into the TRI-Rock program, successful applicants are informed of the next available start date. As shown in CHART 4, the thirty-week program includes two distinct phases. Phase I involves ten weeks (35 hours per week) of education, group work, soft skills training, and counseling in such areas of job search and resume preparation, anger management, work etiquette, problem solving, health and nutrition.

CHART 4: The TRI-Rock Program


Successful applicants enter the TRI-Rock Program
HOUSING SUPPORT
INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT
Phase I: 10 Weeks
Pre-employment supports including education, soft-skills training, job-search training and counseling.
Phase II: 20 Weeks
Employment placement consistent with the interest and career path of the individual.

During Phase II of the program, TRI-Rock participants are provided with a twenty-week employment placement opportunity with a local business or organization. During both phases of the TRI-Rock program, participants receive a bimonthly stipend through HRSDC funds.

Securing and maintaining adequate and affordable housing is a core element of the TRI-Rock program, appreciating that unstable living situations can result in a substantial barrier to employment. Individualized housing support is provided through out the course of the program, with the objective of achieving a positive shift in housing status.

In addition to the content/curriculum incorporated into the pre-employment phase of the program (Phase I), TRI-Rock participants receive additional individualized supports as required. These may include support with substance abuse issues, mental health issues, anger management or other factors that effect the individual's employability.

3.1.1 Participant Involvement in Program Development

It is important to appreciate the complexity of issues and barriers faced by many street involved youth. Within this context, it is also important to appreciate the challenges faced by TRI-Rock staff in developing relevant and effective program elements and protocols.

The process through which a community-based program is developed and operated is crucial to its success. This is especially true when program participants are facing such a range of complex issues. This section of the report highlights some of the features that contributed and continue to contribute to the success of the program.

Participants enter the TRI-Rock program in small groups at five-week intervals, so that at any time there are participants at different points in the program. As the first group started the program in January of 2001, a process was developed whereby participants could provide feedback and suggestions as to how specific lessons, activities or groups could be more relevant and effective. These feedback sessions are still an integral part of the program, and continue to inform specific program elements.

Participant involvement in program development, while often difficult to manage, can have significant effects on the success of a program. When program participants are consulted, and see real changes based on their input, they begin to develop a sense of ownership of the program. Consequently, this sense of

ownership often results in a greater commitment to the program. In fact, many TRI-Rock graduates are still very much involved in the program as mentors to new TRI-Rock participants.

Through openness to feedback and input from program participants, TRI-Rock staff learned a number of important lessons over the past three years. Working with a population with complex needs and issues requires an appropriate mix of generic program elements and individual supports. This is particularly true with respect to housing, where each client enters the program with very different circumstances. Through feedback from TRI-Rock participants, Living Rock staff developed a sense of the flexibility required in effectively supporting street involved youth.

Through the process of supporting participants in securing adequate housing, preparing them for employment, and supervising work placements, a number of basic issues emerged. For example, staff quickly learned that many of the TRI-Rock participants did not have a bank account, and none had a full set of identification. As a result of these observations, most participants now complete Phase I of the program with a birth certificate, a social insurance card, and a bank account. Parental responsibilities were also identified by staff as a barrier to participation or completion of the TRI-Rock program. In response, the Living Rock is working toward establishing child-care supports for their clients.

3.2 TRI-Rock Outcome Measures

The formal evaluation of the TRI-Rock program was based on a set of ten outcome measures, designed to identify successes in achieving the goals of the project. These measures include the change in living situation, positive shift in housing, completion/participation in Phase I of the program, completed resume and cover letter, opened bank account, acquired personal identification, completion/participation in Phase II, employer and employee satisfaction, confirmed letter of reference, and client status six weeks after program completion.

The following sections detail the findings from each of the outcome measures. Measures were recorded as of March 5, 2004, the point at which a caseload summary was provided for this summary report.

3.2.1 Change in Living Situation

Each program participant is asked to provide information about their housing status as they start the program, as they complete Phase I of the program, again as they complete Phase II and finally after they have completed the program.

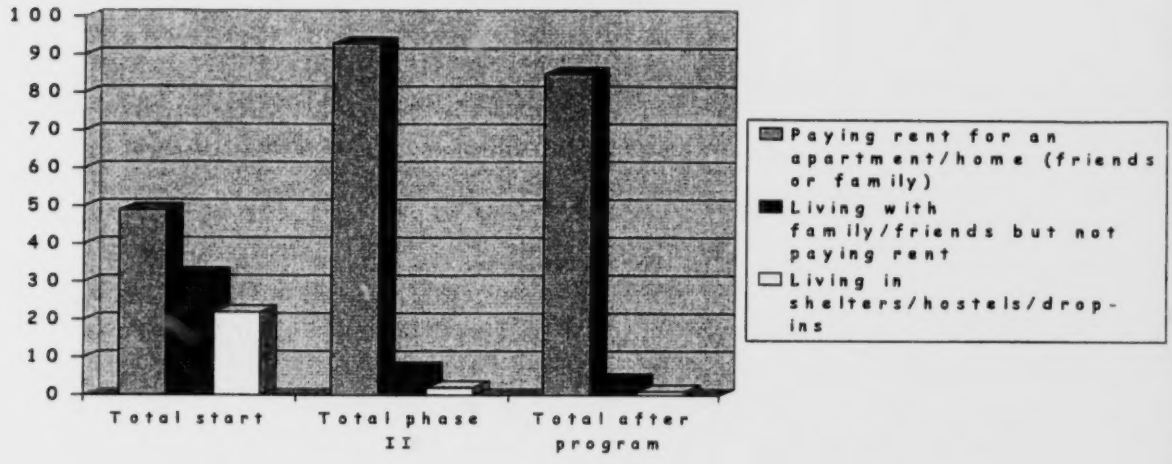
As indicated in TABLE 6, participants in the program show a marked improvement in housing status and stability after entry into the program and upon completion.

TABLE 6: Shift in Living Situations - TRI-Rock Participants

Status	Total start	Total Phase II	Total After Program
Paying rent for an apartment/home (alone)	13	14	11
Paying rent for an apartment/home (friends or family)	49	93	85
Paying rent for a room (rooming/boarding house)	11	5	1
Living in a group home	3	1	0
Living on the streets	2	0	0
Living with family/friends but no paying Rent	32	7	4
Living in shelters/hostels/drop-ins	22	2	1
Other	2	0	0
Total responses	134	122	102

The most dramatic changes in housing status were in the number of participants paying rent for their housing. Those paying rent by Phase II had almost doubled. Tnere were similarly dramatic reductions in the number of participants living in shelters or with family and friends and not paying rent. These shifts in housing situations are highlighted in CHART 5.

CHART 5: Change in Housing Status Over Time



3.2.2 Positive Shift in Housing Status

Participants in the program are asked to report the extent to which they feel their involvement in the TRI-Rock program has enabled them to change their housing condition, if at all. Of 120 participants responding as of March 5, 2004, 96 or 80% of program participants felt that their housing condition was better. No members of the program reported that their housing conditions had worsened since taking part in the program.

3.2.3 Participation and Completion of Phase I

At the entry and assessment level of the program, records indicate that 132 individuals participated in the REP program as part of the screening process. Their participation represents 3,168 person hours of supervised work experience, or an average of 24 hours per client. Much of this time represents volunteer work conducted in the community.

Phase I of the TRI-Rock program provides life skills development and counseling to program participants. Records of participants that have completed Phase I indicate that of 130 participants, 106 or 82% received a Certificate of Completion for this portion of the program, or 30 weeks of participation. The number of hours in Phase I that each participant has spent in the program was reported at 41,280 hours or 317.5 hours on average per participant.

3.2.4 Completed Resume and Cover Letter

One important marker of achievement in Phase I of the TRI-Rock program is that participants have completed a resume and cover letter for use in job search activity. Reports of participant's success with this indicator show that 127 of 133 participants in the program successfully produced a resume and cover letter at the conclusion of this stage in the program for a completion rate of 95%.

3.2.5 Opened a Bank Account

Another important indicator of achievement in Phase I of the program is the opening of a bank account. This step is considered an important step for youth in their progress towards job readiness. Reports of participants' success with this indicator show that 24% of participants had a bank account at the outset, while another 30% of participants had no bank account to start but were able to establish one during their participation in the program. The remaining 46% of participants were not successful in opening their own bank account while in the program.

3.2.6 Obtained Personal Identification Documents

Possession of other identification documents is seen as important building blocks in preparing for a job. The TRI-Rock program assists participants in acquiring documents such as a social insurance number, health card and birth certificate. The majority of participants in the program had some or all of these documents as they entered the program. Still of the 129 participants reporting on possession of these documents, 5% more participants had their birth certificate and social insurance number by the end of Phase I and 10% more had a health card at the end of Phase I than at entry to the program.

Program participants are also encouraged as part of the TRI-Rock program to identify a family doctor or establish a connection with a local health clinic as another expression of employment readiness and attention to personal health. Their success in pursuit of this objective is also recorded in their client files during the program. Of the 119 program participants that had provided data on this measure, 54% had such a contact at the outset of the program while another 37% were able to make this connection through the support and encouragement provided by the TRI-Rock program.

3.2.7 Participation and Completion of Phase II

Phase II of the TRI-Rock program focuses on arranging external work placements that reflect their interests, skills and strengths for each youth member of the program. Records on the program's success with this endeavor indicate that 86

participants had reported their employment hours for this phase of the program as of March 5, 2004. In total, 56,381 hours of employment are reported for an average of 655.6 hours of employment for each participant in the program. This would be equivalent to approximately 16 weeks of full 40-hours/ week employment for participants in the program. In the final phase of the program participation rates drop. Approximately 66% of those completing Phase I go on to complete the employment phase of the program.

3.2.8 Employer/Employee Satisfaction

After a TRI-Rock participant has completed their twenty-week work placement during Phase II of the program, both the participant and the employer are asked to complete a short satisfaction survey. At the time of reporting, 80% of participants (employees) reported that their experience was either "good" or excellent", based on a five-point scale. With respect to employers, 75% reported either a "good" or "excellent" experience.

3.2.9 Confirmed Letter of Reference

As a further show of success, and as a benefit to the TRI-Rock participant, employers are asked if they would be willing to provide a letter of reference upon the completion of Phase II. To date, 72% of employers involved in the TRI-Rock program agreed to provide a letter of reference.

3.2.10 Client Status at Follow-up

In efforts to understand the long-term success of the TRI-Rock program, participants are contacted six weeks after the completion of the thirty-week program. Among those who completed the program, a total of 67% were either employed or attending school. Specifically, 64% were employed at the time of follow-up, with 34% working full-time. An additional 3% of participants were attending or registered for school at the time of follow-up.

3.3 Expectations of the Project Funder

The Living Rock Ministries and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), the primary funder of the program, agreed on a set of three outcome measures, that would be used to assess the success of the project in assisting homeless, at-risk street-involved youth in obtaining stable employment and housing in the community. The following specific measures were identified:

Program completion

A successful program is expected to have a completion or 'graduation' rate of 60% of participants. According to this measure of success for the program, TRI-Rock has been successful over the period being reported. Of 130 participants recorded

for Phase I of the program, 106 received a Certificate of Completion for a success rate of 81.5%. Of those participants carrying on in the program, 66% completed the employment phase.

Securing and Maintaining Stable Housing

A successful program is expected to demonstrate a rate of 60% improvement in housing conditions. Participants in the TRI-Rock program self-reported in 80% of cases an improvement in housing conditions. Other measures of housing conditions were recorded. We assume for this analysis that improvements in housing conditions would be indicated by the following changes: an increase in those paying rent for housing, a decrease in those living in a room or boarding house, a decrease in those living in group homes, living on the street, living in shelters or living with family or friends and not paying rent.

According to these assumptions there was a dramatic improvement in housing conditions. Reports show an increase of 37% of those participants able to rent their own housing and a decline of 45% of participants living in group homes, shelters, boarding houses or living with family and friends and not paying rent. This represents a cumulative improvement in housing for 82% for participants at the end of Phase I of the program.

Employment or School Attendance

After the program: a successful program according to this indicator would result in 60% of program graduates continuing on with active employment or attendance at school. As reported in section 3.2.7, a total of 67% of TRI-Rock graduates were either employed or attending school six weeks after the program.

HRSDC also promotes the creation of partnerships with other community agencies in the provision of funded programs. Over the past three years, Living Rock staff have partnered with 17 different community agencies to enhance the TRI-Rock program (see APPENDIX A for a list of partner agencies). This represents extensive networking and collaboration.

In addition to partnerships with local agencies, the Living Rock has established strong relationships with a number of local employers. Over the past three years, TRI-Rock participants have been placed at 69 different local businesses (see APPENDIX B for a list of local employers). Many of these employers have accepted or agreed to accept additional TRI-Rock participants for work placements. This represents extensive outreach on the part of Living Rock staff, and an effective approach to partnering with the private sector.

4.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The design of the TRI-Rock program is consistent with current research on local employment service needs. In a recent study conducted by the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton, *Assessment of the Employment Services System in Hamilton (2003)*, a number of broad recommendations were made. Specifically, the report recommended an increase in pre-employment supports (including housing, income and health care supports) that address individual needs, an investment in work experience opportunities, and the coordination of support services (i.e. income supports, access to meal programs and food bank, housing supports and employment supports).

The TRI-Rock program addresses the need for more work experience opportunities for clients of local employment services. In addition, the program was designed to address a range of individual issues and circumstances in efforts to increase the employability of TRI-Rock participants. By identifying and addressing housing and other individual issues, program participants were able to gain a level of stability which enhanced their ability to effectively manage a twenty-week work placement and, in many cases, go on to secure full or part-time employment.

Evidence from records on client experience at TRI-Rock indicate that the program is being delivered effectively and producing benefits for clients which meet their best interests and satisfy the requirements of funders for performance outcomes. There is evidence however, that additional individualized supports, such as childcare, could further enhance program outcomes. Current funding for the TRI-Rock program however, does not provide for additional supports.

It would still be useful through further program development to strengthen tracking efforts of clients, to gather more information on their experience and condition months and even a full year after having completed the TRI-Rock program. While more data of this kind would enhance our understanding of the long-term success of the program, there is currently no funding available for this work.

The information management system is proving to be a benefit to the agency and the community. It continues to provide the Living Rock with ongoing measures of their program results, as well as provide funders and others in the community with vital information about the impact of this model of intervention and support as a way of increasing capacity for at-risk youth to participate in the labour force.

As noted in the report, there were two main challenges involved in developing the data management system. The first challenge was in identifying the most relevant information to collect that is sensitive enough to show trends over time. The second challenge was related to the reliability of self-reported information. These challenges represent an ongoing learning process. Anticipating the need for ongoing modification of the data management system, the database was designed to be flexible and adaptable.

4.1 Conclusions

The following conclusions are based on a comprehensive analysis of findings and observations made during the past three years. They also relate to local service needs and best practices as identified through existing local research. Based on this analysis, we conclude that:

1. The TRI-Rock program is an effective approach to connecting street involved youth with the local labour market.

2. The design of the TRI-Rock program is consistent with local needs and best practices identified in other local research.

3. An important component related to the success of TRI-Rock is that individual needs are identified and addressed through the course of the program.

4. The success of the TRI-Rock program was enhanced by effective partnerships with existing community services.

5. The success of the TRI-Rock program was enhanced by connecting participants to supports outside the program such as access to meal programs and the food bank.

6. The success of the TRI-Rock program could be further enhanced with funding to address employment barriers not currently addressed, such as childcare.

7. Funding to conduct more extensive follow-up with TRI-Rock graduates (i.e. after one or two years) would increase our understanding the success of the program over the long-term.

8. The data management system developed for the Living Rock Ministries produces and will continue to produce valuable information on street-involved youth in Hamilton.

9. The information generated through the data management system is valuable to both the Living Rock and the community as a whole in planning for effective service delivery for street-involved youth.

APPENDIX A
List of Community Partners

List of Community Partners

Community Partners

The Living Rock collaborates closely with the following external organizations:

- Alternatives for Youth (A/Y)
- Catholic Family Services
- Saint John's First Aid
- Social and Public Health Services, City of Hamilton - Outreach and Assessment
- Aboriginal Health Centre, Hamilton -sponsorship of Breakfast Program and provision of Nurse Practitioner
- ABEA- Adult Basic Education Association - onsite purchased service for educational assessment
- YMCA-facilities and training, including Careerworx
- Social and Public Health Services Division, City of Hamilton - Assertive Outreach worker to give regular on-site visits
- Wesley Urban Ministries Transitional Youth Drop-in and Wesley Youth Shelter housed at the Living Rock
- Good Shepherd Centre, Good Shepherd Youth Services, Notre Dame House
- Urban Core Community Health Centre
- Adolescent Community Care Centre -on-site assistance, as needed, related to housing supports
- McMaster University -social work, divinity college, medical and nursing students
- Mohawk College - Social Service Worker Program, Police Foundations, Child and Youth Worker Program
- Salem Mental Health Services - Certified Art Therapist oversees art expression
- Social Planning and Research Council - Evaluation Plan and implementation
- Members of Youth Serving Agencies Network (YSAN), Street-Involved Youth Network, and Youth Employment Network (YEN)
- Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board -placement of students
- Hamilton YMCA -provide access to recreational facilities
- Hamilton YWCA- volunteer opportunities
- Food Share of Hamilton -food for food bank and meal programs
- Hamilton Detention Centre
- Local Police Services and Emergency Services

APPENDIX B
List of Local Employers

Local Employers

To date, the following employers have partnered with the Living Rock TRI-Rock program to provide youth work placements:

- "20 for 7" Convenience
- Advanced Welding Techniques Inc.
- Alliance Computers
- Art Gallery of Hamilton
- Artic Refrigeration
- Avondale Video Super Store
- Babylon Custom Woodworking
- Budget Environmental Disposal
- Burger King
- Burno's School of Hair Design
- C & L Decorating and Painting
- Canadian Football Hall of Fame
- Canweb TV
- Carstar quality Collision Centre
- Central Repair Shop
- Central Repair Shops
- Chestnut Tree Preschool
- Commercial Cleaning Services
- Crabby Joe's Tap and Grill
- Douglas Construction
- Fitness Firm
- Forest Gate Restaurant
- G.W. Thompson Jeweler and Pawnbroker Ltd.
- Garside Daycare
- Goodness Me Natural Food Market
- Grin Audio
- Hadrian Manufacturing
- Hamilton Bulldogs Hockey Club
- Hamilton Indoor and Outdoor Go-carts
- Hamilton-Burlington SPCA
- His and Hers Styles and Cuts
- International Children's Learning Centre
- Ivory's Restaurant
- Ivy's House of Flowers
- Jamesville Children's Centre
- Jamesville Children's Centre
- Kelsey's Restaurant
- Lancing Fab Inc.
- Little Learning House
- Living Rock Ministries
- MJV Masonry
- Mountain Collision Centre
- Networx Internet & Networking Solutions
- NIIPA Gallery
- Paul Douglas Construction
- Pro One Hour Photo
- Puttin' on the Ritz
- Rainbow Now!
- Ray Bedard's Hard Facing
- Rayne Construction Inc.
- Rebel Trading
- Rebel Trading
- Recycled Instrument and Sound
- Regency Boxing
- Riverside Landscaping
- Salvation Army Golden Agers Centre
- Shoppers Drug Mart
- Soundbox
- Stadium Mall Price Choppers
- Stop 'n' Go Automotive
- Swiss Chalet
- Tapawingo Day Care Centre
- The Elizabeth Fry Society
- The Framing Warehouse
- The Hamilton YWCA
- Townsview Lifecare Centre